



Children & Family News

April 2005

N.D. Dept. of Human Services' Children & Family Services Division Update

Children & Family Services Review Results

After states implemented the Adoption and Safe Families Act requirements, the federal Department of Health and Human Services established the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) to assess whether states conform to state plan requirements and are achieving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the children and families involved in the child welfare system.

North Dakota's review occurred in 2001. Reviewers used information from a statewide assessment, on-site reviews of a sample of children and families served in Cass, Grand Forks, and Burleigh counties; statewide data, and interviews with state and community representatives.

No state has achieved "substantial conformity" with all federal standards. North Dakota met nine of 14 outcomes, which was more than any other state.

North Dakota's review identified several areas needing improvement, and the state developed and is now implementing a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). North Dakota has already met many of the goals in the plan and continues to collaborate with counties to further improve child welfare services. To monitor progress, the state conducts comparable reviews in each human service center region.

Improving Performance:

- In 2003, North Dakota completed its first annual review of child welfare services in all eight human service center regions with an overall rating of 83.7 percent.
- In 2004, the second regional review yielded an overall rating of 90.1 percent.

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Areas Most Improved:

Data from the federal review and the two department-conducted reviews identified the following outcomes:

- Conformance with the federal safety standard titled *risk of harm to children* increased from 78 percent to 92.7 percent. The aggregate compliance rate for the three regions reviewed through mid-February 2005 was 98 percent on this measure.
- Compliance with the standard on *needs and services for children, parents, and foster parents* increased from 50 percent to 81.7 percent. Reviews of three regions conducted through February 2005 showed conformance at 90 percent.
- *Worker visits with child* conformance grew from 78 percent to 91.5 percent.
- Conformance with the *mental health of the child* standard increased from 80 percent to 88.9 percent.

Areas Needing Improvement:

North Dakota continues to experience challenges in some areas.

- Conformance with the federal standard on *repeat maltreatment*, which refers to additional reports of suspected abuse or neglect related to a specific perpetrator, fell from 89.3 percent in 2001 to 85.4 percent in 2004. This indicates an increase in repeat maltreatment reports during that time period. This trend appears to be turning around in a positive direction. 2005 reviews completed in three regions through mid-February showed that together those regions were in 93 percent conformance with this federal child safety standard.
- Conformance with the *foster care re-entries* standard fell from 84.7 percent to 81.8 percent from 2001 to 2004 indicating that more children were reentering the foster care system.

Reviews completed in three regions through mid-February 2005 showed that together those regions were 86 percent in conformance with the federal standard.

- *Worker visits with the children* improved overall to 89 percent conformance in 2004. However, subsequent reviews indicate that worker visits may not focus on the pertinent issues of the case plan, the services recommended, or the attainment of goals set for individual children and families. Through February 15, 2005, three regional reviews showed a 95 percent conformance rate.
- *Worker visits with parents* improved from 82 percent in 2001 to 86.2 percent in 2004. Reviews completed through mid-February 2005 showed a 92 percent conformance rate.

Ongoing Efforts:

Reviews of all eight human service center regions and county social service offices have been scheduled in 2005. The process provides information about the strengths and challenges specific to each region.

In addition to case level reviews involving children and families, and regional stakeholder meetings, administrative staff members from the North Dakota Supreme Court have also been invited to participate in the regional review process in order to help align the court system's Court Improvement Project with the Children and Family Services Review.

North Dakota is scheduled for its next federal review in 2007.

DHS welcomes Carla Kessel

The North Dakota Department of Human Services has hired Carla Kessel as program administrator for children's mental health services. In January, Kessel assumed the responsibilities previously held by JoAnne Hoesel, who is now director of the department's Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Kessel is responsible for maintaining a statewide system of children's mental health services, and will lead ongoing

statewide planning efforts. She is also responsible for conducting licensure reviews of residential treatment centers in North Dakota and is available to provide consultation and technical assistance on the wraparound process and single plan of care.

"This is a great opportunity to help meet the mental health needs of children and families from across the state. I look forward to collaborating and networking with system partners," Kessel said.

Kessel is a licensed independent clinical social worker. She earned her master's degree in social work from the University of North Dakota. Before joining DHS, she was the clinical supervisor for wraparound case management services at Burleigh County Social Services.

During her career, she was employed at a residential treatment facility and provided case management and therapy services to children with serious emotional disorders and their families. Her work experience also includes providing care coordination for the Partnerships Project in Burleigh County. She also worked for the Protection and Advocacy Project serving people with mental illness and has provided social work and case management services to residents of long-term care facilities.

Kessel's office is located in the Children and Family Services Division. She can be reached at 701-328-2335 or via e-mail at sokesc@state.nd.us.

Staff News

Don Snyder, administrator for foster care, adoption, and refugee services for the North Dakota Department of Human Services, has been elected to the board of directors of the National Association of Foster Care Managers. Snyder will serve a two-year term representing foster care managers across the United States.

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